

tongue into its right nostril. It repeated the process four times. Then it wet its left nostril by inserting the wet tongue into it thrice. After this, it trotted away.

Due to severe heat and dry wind, the nostrils probably became dry and hard, causing discomfort and the jackal inserted its tongue into

the nostril to moisten the inner side of its nose. I took a photograph of the jackal wetting its nostril.

February 2, 2000

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3. SLOTH BEAR *MELURSUS URSINUS* SHAW AND POWER METER

The Sumer rest house, situated in the Kumbalgarh Wildlife Sanctuary, is located in a secluded place away from Sumer village. About 100 m from the rest house there is a well, which provides water to the rest house and to two waterholes nearby. To pump water from the well, there is an electric motor, with the switch board and meter fixed in a small room over the platform of the well.

Except when visited by forest officers or tourists, the rest house remains unguarded, for fear of sloth bears. In summer, water is found at four places in the vicinity. Sloth bears occasionally visit the rest house after quenching their thirst from the waterholes nearby. Sometimes they also enter the rooms, possibly attracted to the food left behind by visitors. On

several occasions, I have seen sloth bear scats in the verandah and in the kitchen.

On one occasion, a sloth bear came to the waterhole near the well, and after quenching its thirst, climbed onto the platform, from where it apparently heard the humming sound of the meter. The bear possibly took it to be the humming of honey bees, for it broke open the door of the room and smashed the meter in search of honey. Instead of honey, it received a severe jolt from the electric current. The bear howled repeatedly for several minutes and then ran off.

February 18, 2000

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4. NEW RECORDS AND STATUS OF BLACKBUCK *ANTILOPE CERVICAPRA* IN BUENOS AIRES PROVINCE, ARGENTINA

Blackbuck was first introduced into Argentina for sport hunting in 1906, in La Pampa province. In 1912, there were further releases in Santa Fe, Cordoba and Buenos Aires provinces (Lever 1985). It became well established in these four localities, and lately in Entre Rios and San Luis provinces (Chebez 1994). The dispersal of the species has been assisted by translocation to new, previously uncolonized areas, mainly as a result of commercial interest from game ranches. Buenos Aires province manages blackbuck as a

big game species, and permits shooting to control populations and for the wild meat market. There is extensive evidence that blackbuck has a detrimental impact on native biota and agricultural produce (Navas 1987). However, there have been no substantial studies on the species distribution, population biology, or impact on local ecosystems of Argentina.

From 1995 to 1997, we made field surveys in the potential distribution range areas. We also compiled all the literature and unpublished

information at the local Wildlife Department, to determine the current distribution and status of *Antelope cervicapra* in Buenos Aires province.

There are 11 game ranches (50% of the total legally established ranches) with blackbuck populations. The sport hunting season traditionally opens from March 15 and extends to December 31, based on the notion that fawns are born in summer (January and February). Despite this, there are records from captive and wild populations about females giving birth throughout the year. 53 male trophies have been legally taken from game ranches in 1995, 44 in 1996 and 103 in 1997, most of them by foreign hunters. In 1997, there was at least one permit issued for commercial harvesting.

The previous record of distribution (Galliari *et al.* 1991) has now been expanded. We confirmed the occurrence of blackbuck at the Chascomús, General Belgrano, Castelli, Bahía Blanca and Guamini departments. Additionally, new records were made for the species at Pila, Dolores, Adolfo Alsina, Coronel Suarez and Coronel Dorrego departments. The biggest and

better established population has its nucleus in 'La Corona' and 'La Guarida del Zorro' game ranches, an area of approximately 12,000 ha, in General Belgrano near the Chascomús district boundary. In 1996, from preliminary line transect censuses, we estimated a population of above 6,000 animals, with a density of 0.56 individual per hectare. However, in 1997, the population was commercially harvested for the meat market, showing a marked decline since this event. We suggest further studies on the species' impact on local biota, to stop uncontrolled translocations, and a closer monitoring of the effect of sport and commercial harvesting on the blackbuck.

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5. INCIDENCE OF AN ELEPHANT CALF *ELEPHAS MAXIMUS* TRAPPED BETWEEN TWO TREE TRUNKS

The first year is considered to be the most vulnerable stage in an elephant's life, when mortality rate ranges from 10% to 30% (Douglas 1972, Barnett 1991). Annual mortality rate of elephant calves aged less than one year is reported to be 36% in Tsavo National Park, Kenya (Laws 1969). Studies on annual mortality

rate in Indian elephant calves (*Elephas maximus*, age <5 years), in Biligiri Rangan Temple Wildlife Sanctuary, South India, was reported to be 4-5% in female and 8-9% in male elephants (Sukumar 1989). Elephant calves are known to die of diseases, intra-specific fights, drowning in floods, landslides, tiger predation, snake bite poisoning,